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(54) **STATIONARY BOOM SUPPORT SYSTEM**

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23, 2010.

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E02B 15/08 (2006.01)
E03B 3/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
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(2013.01); **E02B 15/0835** (2013.01); **E02B**
15/104 (2013.01); **E03B 3/04** (2013.01)

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15/0835; E02B 15/104; E02B 3/04
USPC 405/60, 63-66
See application file for complete search history.

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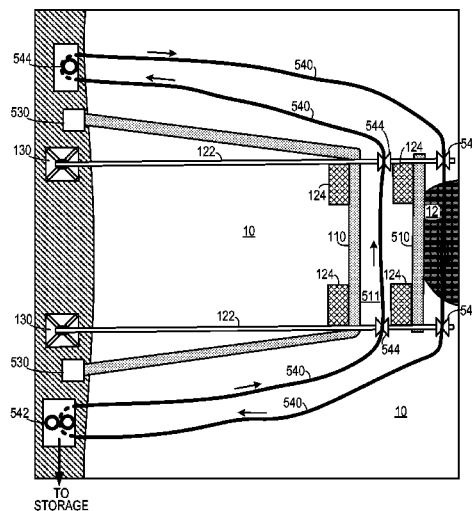
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A containment boom system for remediating an oil spill in a body of water includes a base support structure and two spaced apart containment booms defining a channel therebetween. An elongated rod has a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end. The proximal end is hingedly attached to the base support structure and extends laterally therefrom. A buoy is coupled to the distal end of the elongated rod. The buoy has sufficient buoyancy so as to remain floating on the liquid body while supporting the elongated rod. A reclamation loop is disposed in the water, a first portion of which is disposed in the oil spill and a second portion is disposed in the channel. The reclamation loop is continuously driven through a reclamation station, which removes oil therefrom.

15 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



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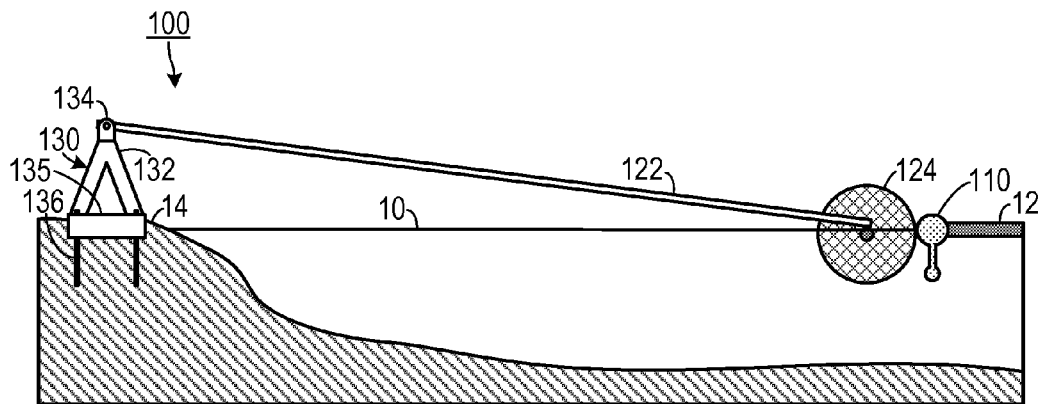


FIG. 1

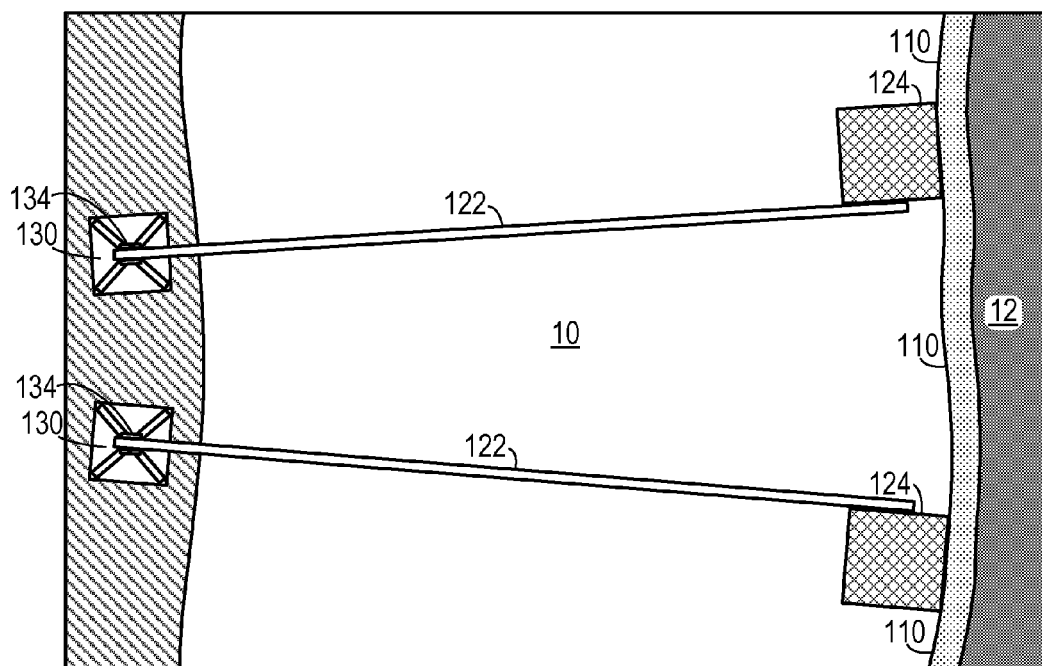


FIG. 2

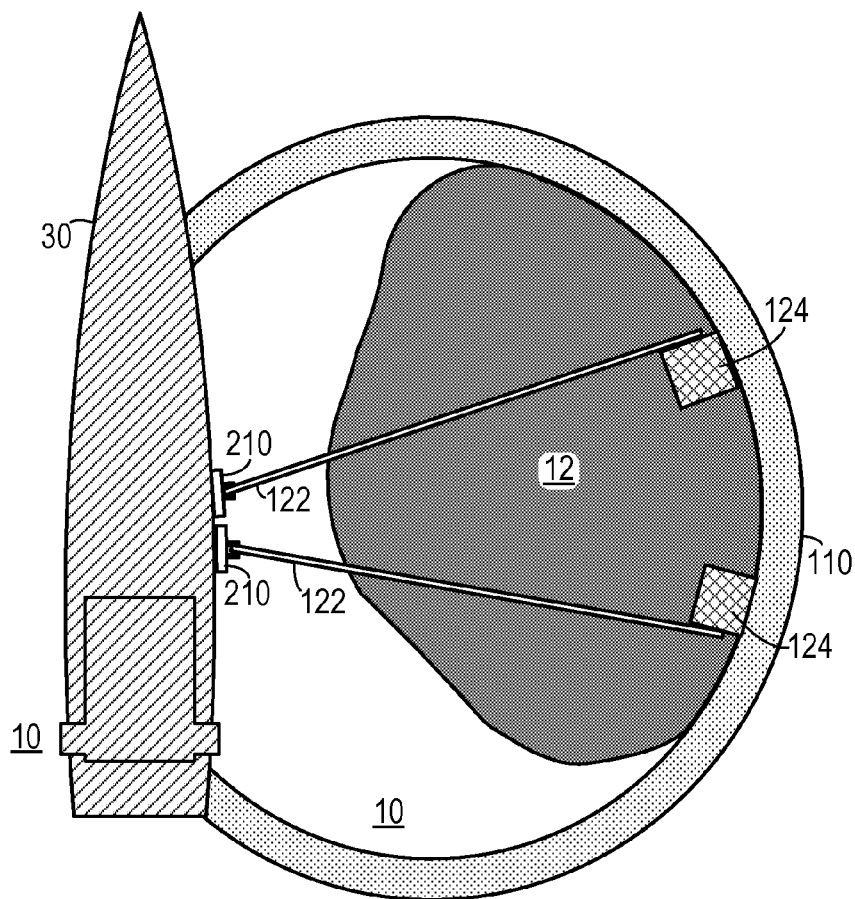


FIG. 3

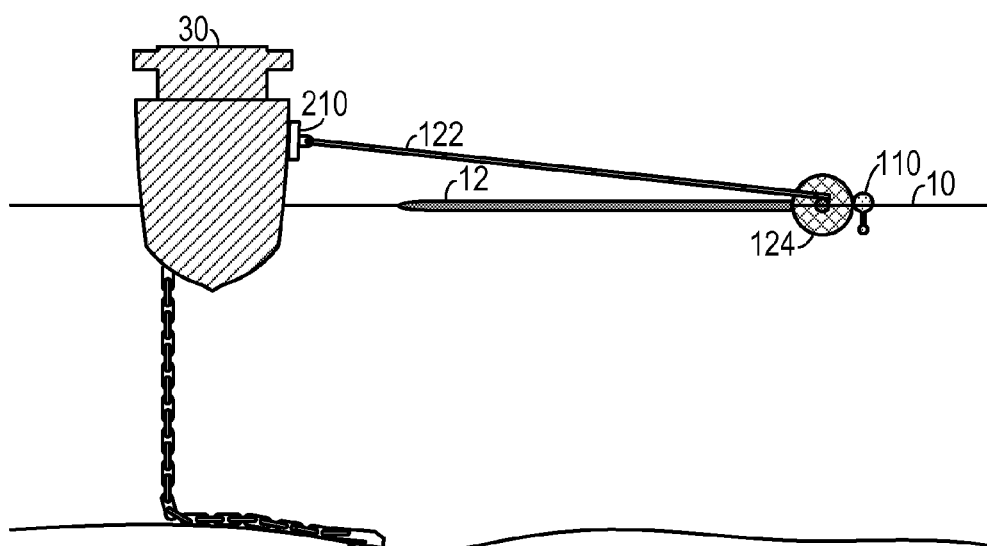


FIG. 4

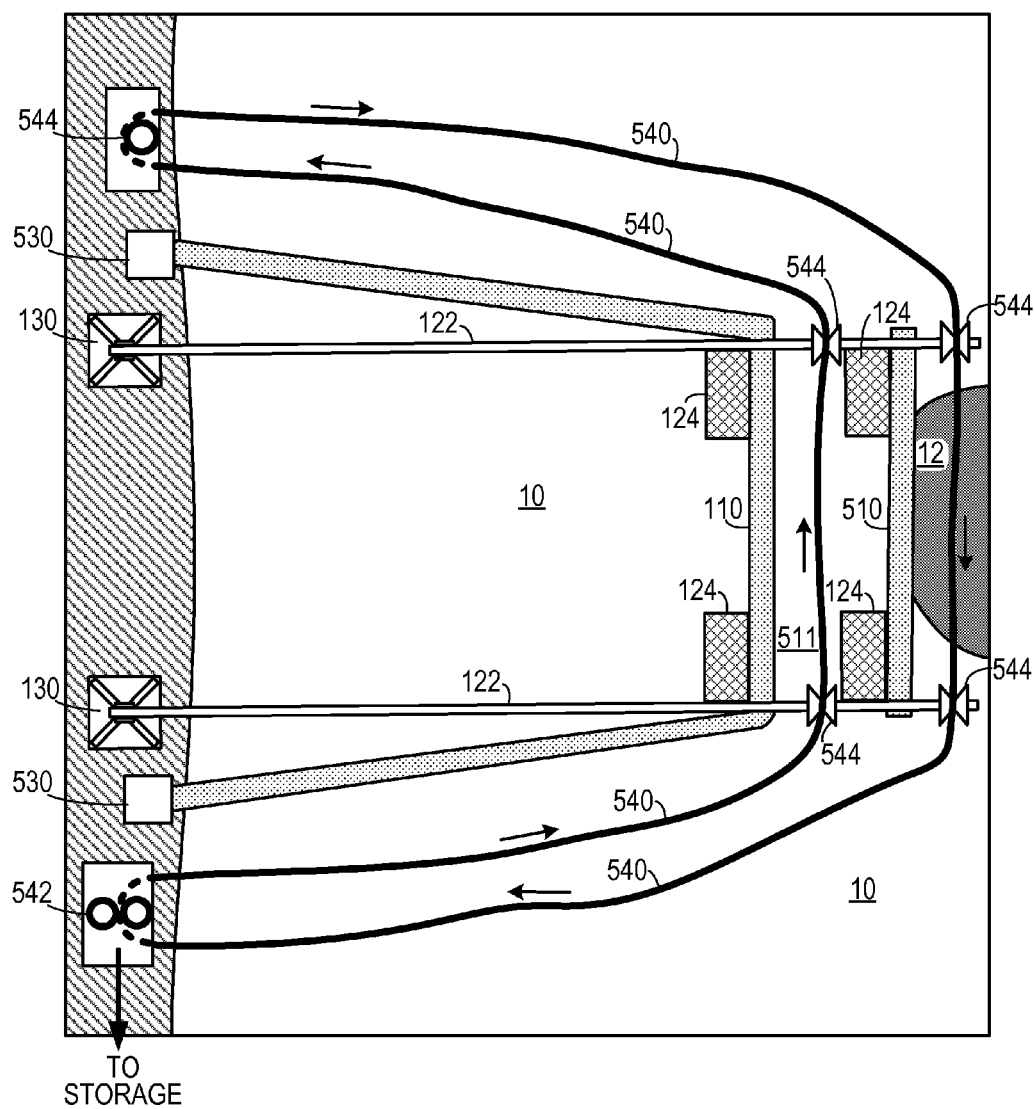


FIG. 5

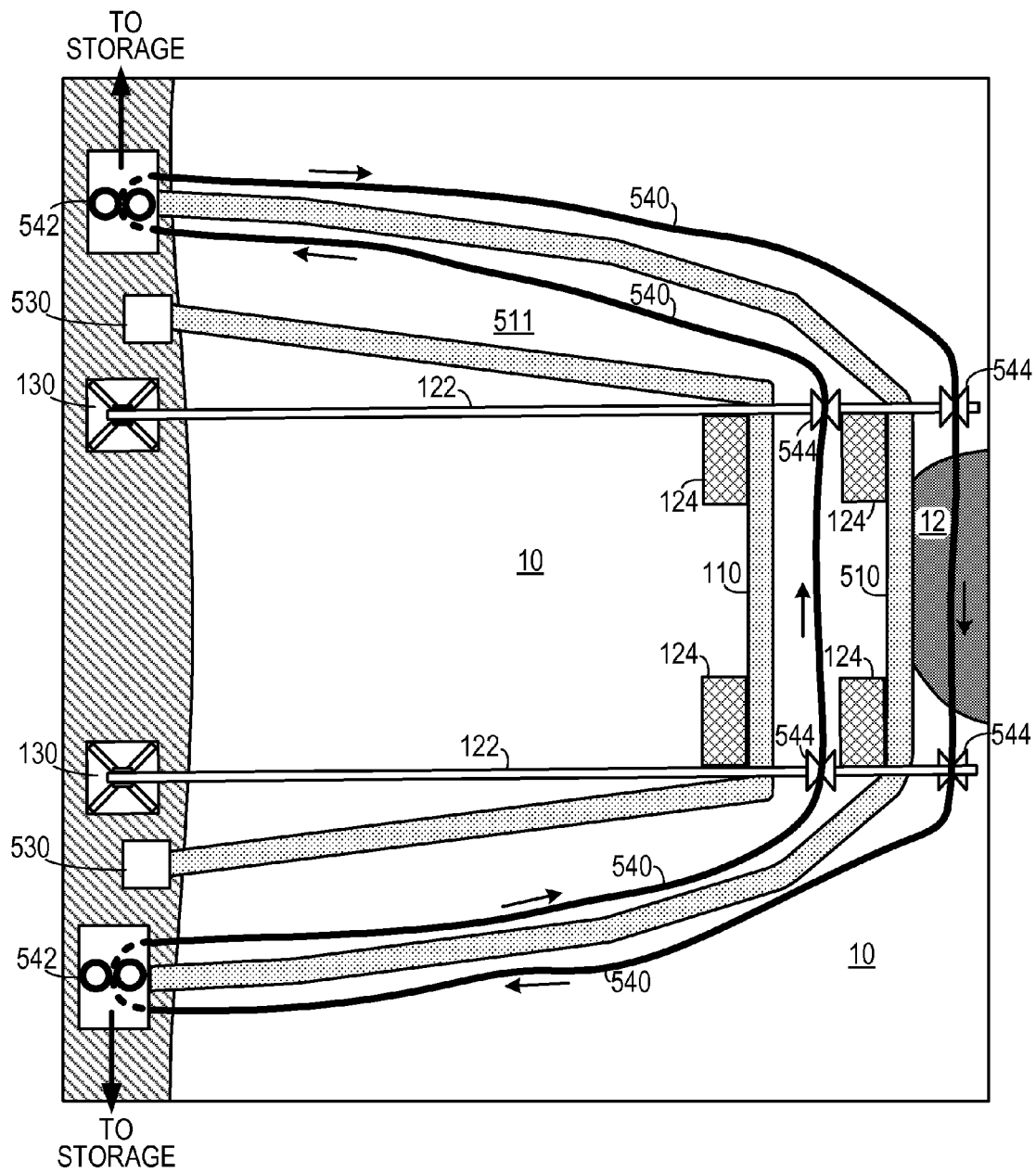


FIG. 6A

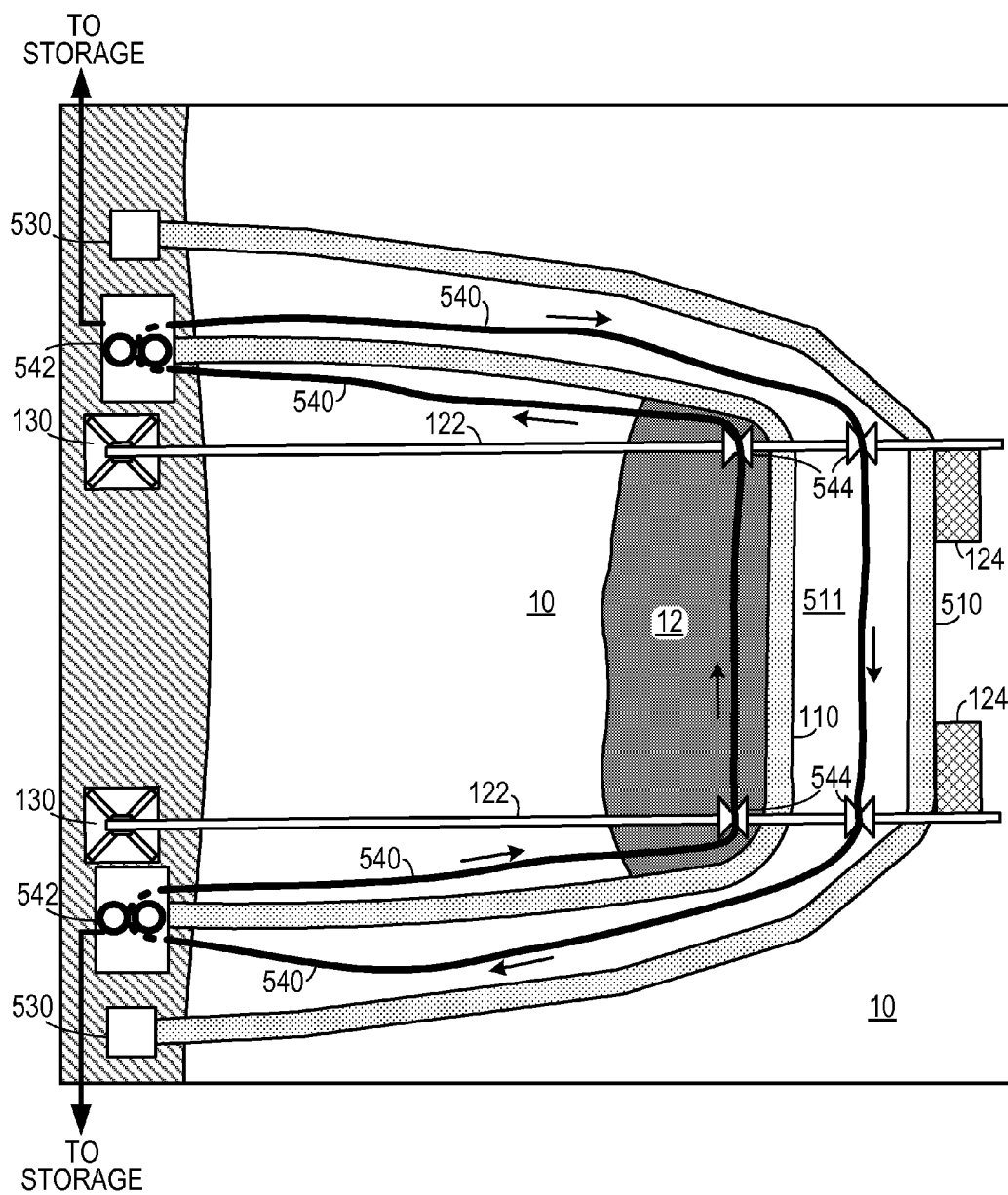


FIG. 6B

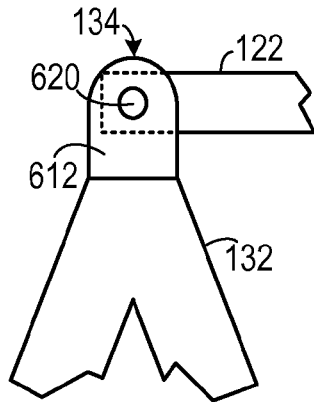


FIG. 7A

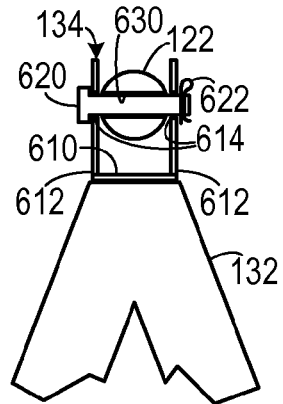


FIG. 7B

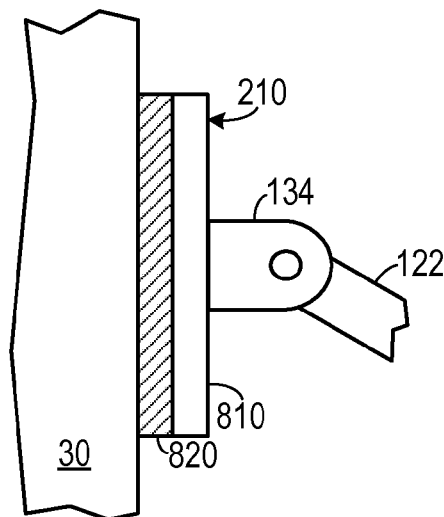


FIG. 8

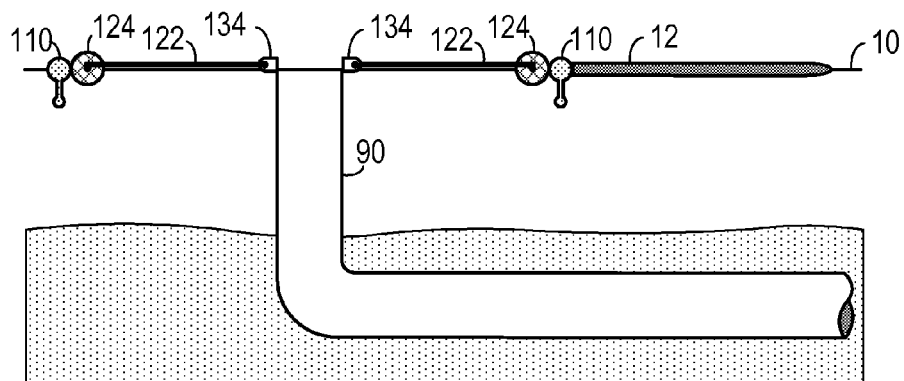


FIG. 9A

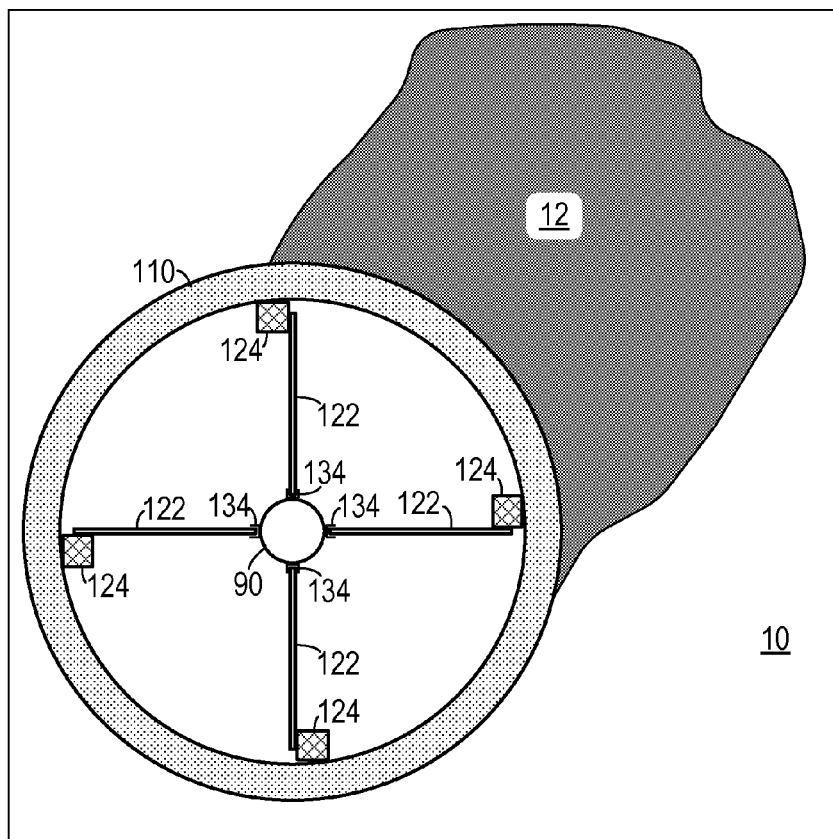


FIG. 9B

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STATIONARY BOOM SUPPORT SYSTEM**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)**

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/367,245, filed Jul. 23, 2010, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. This application is a continuation-in-part of and claims the benefit of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/188,150, filed Jul. 21, 2011, which is also hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**1. Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to containment boom systems and, more specifically, to a containment boom system that is maintained at a distance relative to a fixed point.

2. Background

Oil and chemical spills on surface waters originate from two primary sources—releases from sources in surface water and seepage from shoreline. Releases from sources such as pipelines, ships or other vessels and structures in surface water is an acute condition demanding rapid recovery of large volumes of release. Ineffective recovery results in oil contamination along the shoreline. Seepage from shoreline results in a chronic condition due to gradual migration of releases from storage and conveyance facilities located on the shores. Oil blooms from such seeps contaminate surface waters. Both sources not only present a safety hazard but also pose serious environmental threats to the fragile marine ecosystems vital to local economies.

The current state of the art is to use containment booms and in some instances absorbent booms as well to address the release. Containment booms are used to keep surface oil spills and the like from entering protected areas. Typical booms include a plastic sleeve with a tubular flotation structure running along the length of the sleeve. A weighted structure causes a portion of the sleeve to form a vertical wall that acts as a barricade to the oil spill. Current booms tend to contain the product for only a short time frame before the oil dissipates or seeps past the boom. Containment booms are only capable of containing the release until the waves gradually breach the containment. Upon reaching saturation from oil absorption, the absorbent booms become ineffective presenting a very limited capacity to capture the oil. Eventually, the oil dissipates or seeps past the boom and absorbent booms.

Also, bottom anchors that hold the boom in place can damage the coral reefs on which they rest. As the anchors move with wave action, the tether that connects the anchor to the boom breaks apart. The booms would then be hurled back on to the shores or strung out into the ocean rendering them ineffective. When the booms get washed ashore, rocks and other structures on the shore damage the booms resulting in expensive repairs and replacement costs. In some instances, divers have to tread oily waters to anchor the booms leading to safety hazards.

Consequently, these remedies only serve as temporary solutions resulting in perpetual and escalating costs. Combating oil releases in surface waters is a serious challenge. Therefore, there is a need to invent a method that eliminates bottom anchors and actively recovers the oil along the boom providing effective containment.

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Therefore, there is a need for a stationary boom system that does not require bottom anchors or unanchored free floating systems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The disadvantages of the prior art are overcome by the present invention which, in one aspect, is a containment boom system for use in a liquid body that includes a base support structure and a containment boom. An elongated rod has a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end. The proximal end is hingedly attached to the base support structure and extends laterally therefrom. A buoy is coupled to the containment boom and is coupled to the distal end of the elongated rod. The buoy has sufficient buoyancy so as to remain floating on the liquid body while supporting the elongated rod.

In another aspect, the invention is a reclamation system for use in a body of water on which is disposed an oil spill. At least one elongated rod has a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end. The proximal end is hingedly attached to a base support structure and extends laterally therefrom. The distal end is supported by a buoy. A first containment boom has a first end secured to a first location and a second end secured to a spaced apart second location. The first containment boom is laterally supported by the at least one elongated rod so that the first containment boom separates a portion of the body of water from the oil spill. A reclamation loop is disposed on a selected side of the first containment boom so that a portion of the reclamation loop is in contact with the oil spill. The reclamation loop includes a material that absorbs oil and that does not absorb water. The reclamation loop is mounted on at least one wheel that allows lateral movement of the reclamation loop. A loop driver is configured to cause the reclamation loop to move laterally in a continuous loop. A reclamation station is coupled to the reclamation loop and is configured to extract oil from the reclamation loop as the loop passes there-through, thereby reclaiming oil therefrom.

In yet another aspect, the invention is a method of providing lateral support to a containment boom, in which the containment boom is coupled to a buoy. A proximal end of an elongated rod is hingedly attached to a base support structure. A distal end of the elongated rod is hingedly attached to the buoy. The base support structure is coupled to a predetermined location.

In yet another aspect, the invention is a containment boom system for use in containing an oil spill floating on a water surface. At least one elongated rod has a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end. The proximal end is hingedly attached to a base support structure and extends laterally therefrom. An inner containment boom is coupled to the at least one elongated rod. A buoy is coupled to the at least one elongated rod. The buoy has sufficient buoyancy so as to remain floating on the water surface while supporting the elongated rod. A second containment boom is spaced apart from the first containment boom and is coupled to the at least one elongated rod. The second containment boom is disposed so that the first containment boom and the second containment boom define a channel in the water surface therebetween. The first containment boom and the second containment boom are positioned so that the oil spill is adjacent to a selected one of the first containment boom and the second containment boom, and so that the oil spill is outside of the channel. A continuous rotatable reclamation loop is supported by a structure coupled to the at least one elongated rod. The reclamation loop includes a hydrophobic material that is configured to adsorb the oil and that is configured not to absorb water. The continuous rotatable reclamation loop

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includes a first portion that is disposed in the oil spill and a second portion that is disposed on the water surface in the channel. A reclamation station is configured to remove oil from the reclamation loop as the loop passes therethrough. A loop driver is configured to move the rotatable reclamation loop through the oil spill into the reclamation station and from the reclamation station into the channel.

In yet another aspect, the invention is a method of reclaiming an oil spill in a body of water, in which at least one elongated rod is supported with a buoy that is floating in the water. A proximal end of the elongated rod is hingedly attached to a base support structure. An inner boom is affixed to the at least one elongated rod. An outer boom is affixed to the at least one elongated rod. The inner boom and the outer boom define a channel in the water therebetween and wherein the oil spill is disposed at a location that is a selected one of outside of the outer boom or inside of the inner boom. A continuous rotatable reclamation loop includes a hydrophobic material configured to adsorb oil from the oil spill and configured not to absorb water. The reclamation loop is placed so that a first portion of the reclamation loop is disposed in the oil spill and so that a second portion of the reclamation loop is disposed in the water in the channel. The reclamation loop is supported by structures coupled to the at least one elongated rod. The reclamation loop is driven continuously so as to move the reclamation loop through the oil spill into a reclamation station. Oil is removed from the reclamation loop at the reclamation station as the loop passes therethrough.

These and other aspects of the invention will become apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the following drawings.

As would be obvious to one skilled in the art, many variations and modifications of the invention may be effected without departing from the spirit and scope of the novel concepts of the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an elevational view of a shore-based boom system.

FIG. 2 is a top plan view of the shore-based boom system shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is an elevational view of a ship-based boom system.

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the ship-based boom system shown in FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of an active remediation system.

FIG. 6A is a top plan view of an active remediation system that includes two boom systems that each extend to a shoreline in which an oil spill is contained outside of an outer boom.

FIG. 6B is a top plan view of an active remediation system that includes two boom systems that each extend to a shoreline in which an oil spill is contained inside of an inner boom.

FIGS. 7A-7B are two views of a hinge.

FIG. 8 is a side view of a structure for attaching a boom to a vertical ferrous wall.

FIGS. 9A is an elevational view of an embodiment used with a water intake system.

FIGS. 9B is a plan view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 9A.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A preferred embodiment of the invention is now described in detail. Referring to the drawings, like numbers indicate like

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parts throughout the views. Unless otherwise specifically indicated in the disclosure that follows, the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale. As used in the description herein and throughout the claims, the following terms take the meanings explicitly associated herein, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise: the meaning of "a," "an," and "the" includes plural reference, the meaning of "in" includes "in" and "on."

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, one embodiment of a containment boom system **100** includes an elongated rod **122** that is coupled at a proximal end to a shore-base support system **130** and that is coupled at a distal end to a boom support buoy **124** and a containment boom **110**, both of which are disposed in a body of water **10**. Typically, the containment boom **110** is used to restrict movement of an oil slick **12**, or other such contaminant. The boom support buoy **124** is selected to have sufficient buoyancy to support the elongated rod **122**.

In one embodiment, the elongated rod **122** can include a metal conduit (e.g., steel conduit or aluminum conduit). In a smaller embodiment, the elongated rod **122** could include other materials, such as PVC pipe. In other embodiments, the rod **122** can include wood, plastics, polymers, fiberglass, composites, or any other material from which rods can be made. In one embodiment, the support buoy could be made of a steel drum, such as a 55 gallon steel drum.

The shore-base support system **130** includes a base support structure **132** that is secured to the ground **14**. In some embodiments, the support structure **132** is held in place on a ground surface **14** with an anchoring system that may include a plurality of anchoring rods **136** or is secured to a concrete pad **135**, or both. Alternately, the support structure **132** may be affixed to a stationary object, such as a pier. A hinge **134** is used to secure the proximal end of the elongated rod **122** to the support structure **132**. The hinge **134** allows vertical movement of the distal end of the elongated rod **122**, but restricts lateral movement of the distal end of the elongated rod **122**.

In one embodiment, the elongated rod **122** is hollow to transport oil from the oil slick **12**, recovered with a remediation system, to a shore-based tank (not shown). In another embodiment, the elongated rod **122** supports a separate hose (not shown) for transporting oil.

As shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, the boom system can be attached to a vessel such as a ship **30**, a barge, an oil drilling platform or the like, for containing local spills. Such a system includes a mounting structure **210** for coupling the elongated rod **122** to the hull of the ship **30** (which typically includes a ferrous vertical wall). In one embodiment, the mounting structure **210** can be affixed to the ship **30** with a magnet disposed in the mounting structure **210**. In another embodiment, the mounting structure can be welded to the ship.

As shown in FIGS. 5, 6A and 6B, the boom system can be used with an active reclamation system. In this embodiment, a second outer boom **510** is spaced apart from the primary inner boom **110** and is supported by the rods **122**. The inner boom **110** and the outer boom **510** are made from a non-rigid material and define a channel **511** between the two booms. The inner boom **110** extends to the shore, where it is anchored with a pair of securing anchor members **530**. A reclamation loop **540**, which in one embodiment could include a line with oleophilic and hydrophobic bristles extending radially therefrom, is placed in the water **10** so that an inner portion of the loop **540** is between the inner boom **110** and the outer boom **510** and so that an outer portion of the loop **540** is placed outside of the outer boom **510** into the spill **12**. The loop **510** rotates over a plurality of pulley wheels **544** (which could include a pair of concave wheels that are arranged so as to trap

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the reclamation loop **540** therebetween) in the direction of the arrows into reclamation stations **542**, where oil is reclaimed. One type of remediation system that can be employed in this embodiment is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,659,176, which is incorporated herein by reference. As shown in FIG. 5, a single reclamation station **542** can be employed or, as shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B, two reclamation stations **542** disposed at opposite ends of the reclamation loop **540** can be used. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 6A, the oil spill **12** is contained outside of the outer boom **510**, whereas the oil spill **12** is contained inside of the inner boom **110** in the embodiment shown in FIG. 6B. In one embodiment, the support system **130** could include a shore based structure that is anchored to the ground of the type disclosed in FIG. 1 above. In an alternate embodiment, a heavy ferrous plate could be placed on the shore and a magnetic mounting plate (of a type that will be discussed in more detail below with reference to FIG. 8) can be coupled to the heavy ferrous plate. In one embodiment, the support structure **130** can be affixed to a floating vessel, such as a ship, a boat or a barge. In such an embodiment, the support structure **130** can be permanently mounted to the vessel (for example, by welding it to the vessel or with bolts) or it may be temporarily mounted to the vessel (for example, by using a magnetic coupling or with an adhesive).

One embodiment includes two important elements—a stationary containment boom and active oil recovery along the boom. Fixing the boom position is accomplished with surface anchors and rigid connectors that render the boom geostationary. Active oil recovery can then be initiated within the boom using a hydrophobic fabric that is positioned along the boom or other methods. A multi-tiered boom consisting of two sets of stationary booms equipped with hydrophobic fabric can be utilized to increase the containment and recovery efficiency.

One example of a hinge **134** for coupling the elongated rod **122** to a support or mounting structure **132** is shown in FIGS. 7A and 7B. Two parallel plates **612** extend upwardly from a base plate **610** and each define a hole **614** passing therethrough. The two plates **612** are spaced apart at a distance sufficient to allow the elongated rod **122** to fit therebetween. The elongated rod **122** defines an opening **630** passing therethrough that is in alignment with the holes **614**. A hinge pin **620** passes through the holes **614** and the opening **630** so as to hold the proximal end of the rod **122** in a vertically pivotal relationship with the vertical plates **612**. A cotter pin **622** may be used to hold the hinge pin **620** in place.

As shown in FIG. 8, a mounting structure **210** for securing the hinge **134** to a vessel **30** with a ferrous hull wall includes a hinge mounting plate **810** to which the hinge **134** is secured and a magnet **820** that is coupled to the hinge mounting plate **810**. The magnet **820** can be a permanent magnet or it can be an electromagnet powered, for example, from the vessel. In situations where the vessel **30** has a non-ferrous hull wall, the hinge mounting plate **810** can be secured to the hull wall with an adhesive or a suction unit (e.g., a suction cup that is continually evacuated with a vacuum pump).

The system disclosed herein can be configured either to prevent oil spills from reaching shoreline and water intakes or to contain oil seeps from entering surface waters.

As shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B, one embodiment can be used to hold a containment boom **110** at a predetermined distance from a water inlet **90**, such as an inlet to a water system from a river, a lake or a reservoir. While FIG. 9B shows four elongated rods **122** being used, more may be necessary if the boom **110** is subjected to a substantial amount of hydrodynamic pressure form, such as would be expected in a river. Also, a second containment boom (not shown) that is outside of and substantially concentric with the first contain-

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ment boom **110** could be employed when using a remediation loop so that the return path of the remediation loop does not contaminate water flowing into the intake **90**.

The above described embodiments, while including the preferred embodiment and the best mode of the invention known to the inventor at the time of filing, are given as illustrative examples only. It will be readily appreciated that many deviations may be made from the specific embodiments disclosed in this specification without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention is to be determined by the claims below rather than being limited to the specifically described embodiments above.

What is claimed is:

1. A containment boom system for use in containing an oil spill floating on a water surface, comprising:

- (a) a base support structure;
- (b) at least one elongated rod, having a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end, the proximal end hingedly attached to the base support structure and extending laterally therefrom;
- (c) a first containment boom coupled to the at least one elongated rod;
- (d) a buoy coupled to the at least one elongated rod, the buoy having sufficient buoyancy so as to remain floating on the water surface while supporting the elongated rod;
- (e) a second containment boom spaced apart from the first containment boom and coupled to the at least one elongated rod, the second containment boom disposed so that the first containment boom and the second containment boom define a channel in the water surface therebetween, wherein the first containment boom and the second containment boom are positioned so that the oil spill is adjacent to a selected one of the first containment boom and the second containment boom, and so that the oil spill is outside of the channel;
- (f) a continuous rotatable reclamation loop, supported by a structure coupled to the at least one elongated rod, including a hydrophobic material configured to adsorb the oil and configured not to absorb water, the continuous rotatable reclamation loop including a first portion that is disposed in the oil spill and a second portion that is disposed on the water surface in the channel;
- (g) a reclamation station configured to remove oil from the reclamation loop as the loop passes therethrough; and
- (h) a loop driver that is configured to move the rotatable reclamation loop through the oil spill into the reclamation station and from the reclamation station into the channel.

2. The containment boom system of claim 1, configured to be used to maintain the containment boom at a distance from a fixed location, wherein the base support structure comprises:

- (a) a support platform;
- (b) a support structure, having a top, extending upwardly from the support platform; and
- (c) a hinge affixed to the top of the support structure and coupled to the proximal end of the elongated rod.

3. The containment boom system of claim 2, wherein the fixed location includes a ground surface and further comprising at least one anchoring rod driven into the ground surface so as to secure the support platform to the ground surface.

4. The containment boom system of claim 2, wherein the distal proximal end of the elongated rod defines an opening passing therethrough and wherein the hinge comprises:

- (a) two vertical parallel plates extending upwardly from the top of the support structure, each parallel plate defining

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a hole passing therethrough, the two vertical parallel plates spaced apart at a distance sufficient to allow the proximal end of the elongated rod to be placed therebetween; and

- (b) a pin configured to pass through the holes defined by the vertical plates and the opening defined by the proximal end of the elongated rod so as to hold the proximal end of the elongated rod in a vertically pivotal relationship with the support structure.

5. The containment boom system of claim 1, configured to maintain the containment boom at a distance from a ferrous metal structure, wherein the base support structure comprises:

- (a) a support platform having a first side and an opposite second side;
- (b) a magnet affixed to the first side of the support platform and configured to hold the support platform against the ferrous metal structure; and
- (c) a hinge affixed to the support platform configured to be coupled to the proximal end of the elongated rod.

6. The containment boom system of claim 1, wherein the structure supporting the reclamation loop comprises a wheel that is rotatably coupled to the elongated rod.

7. A reclamation system for use on a body of water on which is disposed an oil spill, comprising:

- (a) at least two spaced-apart elongated rods, each rod having a proximal end and a spaced apart distal end, the proximal end hingedly attached to a base support structure and extending laterally therefrom, each of the elongated rods supported by a buoy;
- (b) a first containment boom having a first end secured to a first location and an second end secured to a spaced apart second location, the first containment boom laterally supported by the elongated rods;
- (c) a second containment boom spaced apart from the first containment boom and disposed so as to define a channel therebetween, wherein the first containment boom and the second containment boom are positioned so that the oil spill is adjacent to a selected one of the first containment boom and the second containment boom, and so that the oil spill is outside of the channel;
- (d) a continuous rotatable reclamation loop including a hydrophobic material configured to adsorb the oil and configured not to absorb water, the continuous rotatable reclamation loop including a first portion that is disposed in the oil spill and a second portion that is disposed in the water in the channel, the rotatable reclamation loop mounted on at least one wheel that allows lateral movement of the reclamation loop;
- (e) a reclamation station coupled to the reclamation loop and configured to extract oil from the reclamation loop as the loop passes therethrough, thereby reclaiming oil therefrom; and
- (f) a loop driver that is configured to move the rotatable reclamation loop through the oil spill into the reclamation station and from the reclamation station into the channel.

8. The reclamation system of claim 7, wherein the buoy has sufficient buoyancy so as to remain floating on the water while supporting the elongated rods.

9. The reclamation system of claim 7, configured to be used to maintain the containment boom at a distance from a fixed location, wherein the base support structure comprises:

- (a) a support platform;
- (b) a support structure, having a top, extending upwardly from the support platform; and

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- (c) a hinge affixed to the top of the support structure and coupled to the proximal end of each of the elongated rods.

10. The reclamation system of claim 9, wherein the fixed location includes a ground surface further comprising at least one anchoring rod driven into the ground surface so as to secure the support platform to the ground surface.

11. The reclamation system of claim 9, wherein the distal proximal end of each of the elongated rods defines an opening passing therethrough and wherein the hinge comprises:

- (a) two vertical parallel plates extending upwardly from the top of the support structure, each parallel plate defining a hole passing therethrough, the two vertical parallel plates spaced apart at a distance sufficient to allow the proximal end of the elongated rod to be placed therebetween; and
- (b) a pin configured to pass through the holes defined by the vertical plates and the opening defined by the proximal end of the elongated rod so as to hold the proximal end of the elongated rod in a vertically pivotal relationship with the support structure.

12. The reclamation system of claim 7, configured to maintain the containment boom at a distance from a ferrous metal structure, wherein the base support structure comprises:

- (a) a support platform having a first side and an opposite second side;
- (b) a magnet affixed to the first side of the support platform and configured to hold the support platform against the ferrous metal structure; and
- (c) a hinge affixed to the support platform configured to be coupled to the proximal end of each of the elongated rods.

13. A method of reclaiming an oil spill in a body of water, comprising the steps of:

- (a) supporting at least one elongated rod with a buoy that is floating in the water;
- (b) hingedly attaching a proximal end of the elongated rod to a base support structure;
- (c) affixing an inner boom to the at least one elongated rod;
- (d) affixing an outer boom to the at least one elongated rod, wherein the inner boom and the outer boom define a channel in the water therebetween and wherein the oil spill is disposed at a location that is a selected one of outside of the outer boom or inside of the inner boom;
- (e) placing a continuous rotatable reclamation loop, including a hydrophobic material configured to adsorb oil from the oil spill and configured not to absorb water, so that a first portion of the reclamation loop is disposed in the oil spill and so that a second portion of the reclamation loop is disposed in the water in the channel and supporting the reclamation loop by structures coupled to the at least one elongated rod;
- (f) driving the reclamation loop continuously so as to move the reclamation loop through the oil spill into a reclamation station; and
- (g) removing oil from the reclamation loop at the reclamation station as the loop passes therethrough.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of securing the base support structure to a ground location on a shoreline.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of securing the base support structure to a sidewall of a floating vessel by applying a magnet to the base support structure and to the sidewall of the vessel so as to hold the base support structure to the sidewall of the vessel.

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